

The Internationalisation of the Conflict in Libya

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Libya has been characterised by instability since the Arab Spring. In 2011, Western powers decided to intervene. In spite of stated goals, this violent dispute has been ongoing ever since. In this paper, we seek to answer the following research question: why do certain internationalised violent disputes, specifically new civil wars, remain violent even when the actors involved seek a cessation of hostilities? We utilise a single-outcome case study⁶ research design and we compare and contrast the involvement of great powers, European leading powers and regional powers. We highlight the use of soft and/or hard foreign policy tools. We distinguish between policy goals and policy tools. We find that the essential interests and policy goals of the analysed powers will unlikely change, but change in the use of their foreign policy tools will likely be a shift towards harder tools, which will exacerbate further the Libyan stabilisation process. Even a coincidence of the stated policy goals of external actors, namely a cessation of hostilities is insufficient to end a new civil war. As long as the policy tools themselves remain un-coordinated between the actors, they counteract one another, and the conflict continues to remain violent.

Keywords: *Libya, internationalisation, new civil war, conflict, foreign policy*

Introduction

Libya has been characterised by instability since the protests of the Arab Spring broke out in February 2011. When protests against the Gaddafi regime were brutally repressed by the Libyan Government, Western powers decided to intervene. The international community strongly condemned the repression of peaceful demonstrators, and the adoption of UNSCR

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⁶ John Gerring, 'Single-Outcome Studies: A Methodological Primer', *International Sociology* 21, no 5 (2006), 707–734.

1973 sealed the fate of Gaddafi's regime. *Operation Odyssey Dawn* was launched, and after an agreement between NATO member states, NATO took the lead in the intervention under the name of *Operation Unified Protector*. However, the successful military intervention was not followed by adequate democracy and state building processes, and this resulted in political turmoil in Libya.

Prior to this intervention, Libya was characterised by 40 years of turbulent statelessness and authoritarian leadership, which was challenged in 2011 by rising notions of civil society and democracy.⁷ Domestic economic, cultural and political factors contributed to failure and difficulties of democracy and state building process and to the fragmentation of post-Gaddafi Libya's security order.⁸ In this paper, we analyse the international influence and its effects on the conflict. We classify this conflict building on Kaldor's work on distinguishing between new and old wars⁹ as a "new civil war". We elaborate on this concept later.

Although the General National Congress (GNC) more or less managed to exercise authority over Libya from 2012 to 2014, since the second Libyan civil war broke out in 2014, no central authority was able to exercise power over the whole country. The increasing polarisation of the Libyan factions resulted into widespread outbreaks of violence across the country. Libya split into three parts, similar to the era before the official unification of the state: Tripolitania (the Western part), Cyrenaica (the Eastern part) and Fezzan (Southern territories). The three parts functioned almost as independent entities. Several Eastern and Western groups have been fighting for power, and since foreign actors started to support them, the domestic conflict has become international. The internationalisation of the conflict¹⁰ became apparent when Khalifa Haftar launched his attack against Tripoli in April 2019 and a new civil war began.

As a case study, this paper aims to understand the connection between domestic conflict and international security questions. We seek to contribute to the literature of the internationalisation of "new civil wars" by underlining the importance of regional and international political factors in explaining why the conflict in Libya has not been resolved and continues to remain violent.¹¹ We analyse three levels of internationalisation: the involvement of great powers (the United States, Russia, China), European leading powers (France, Italy, Germany) and regional powers (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Turkey) in the Libyan crisis. The main features of their Libyan involvement are synthetised, while the use of soft and/or hard foreign policy tools is highlighted. Our

⁷ Emanuela Paoletti, 'Libya: Roots of a Civil Conflict', *Mediterranean Politics* 16 no 2, (2011) 313–319.

⁸ Jean-Louis Romanet Perroux, 'The Deep Roots of Libya's Security Fragmentation', *Middle Eastern Studies* 55 no 2 (2019), 200–224.

⁹ Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars. Organised Violence in a Global Era* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2006).

¹⁰ About Libya see Youssef Mohammad Sawani, 'Post-Qadhafi Libya: interactive dynamics and the political future', *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 5, no 1 (2012), 1–26; Roberto Aliboni et al., *Conflict in Libya: A Multidimensional Crisis. State of Play and Paths towards a Sustainable Peace* (IEMed, European Institute of the Mediterranean, 2017); Mikael Eriksson, 'A Fratricidal Libya: Making Sense of a Conflict Complex', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no 5 (2016), 817–836; George Joffé, 'Where does Libya go now?', *The Journal of North African Studies* 25, no 1 (2020), 1–7.

¹¹ Amy L. Freedman and Sarah Davies Murray, 'Explaining the Internationalization of Insurgencies', in *The Internationalization of Internal Conflicts. Threatening the State*, ed. by Amy L. Freedman (London – New York: Routledge, 2014), 1–2.

analysis centres on how the conflict is internationalised until 2019 and seeks to answer why the conflict has continued to remain violent in spite of the actors' coinciding goal of a cessation of hostilities.

Conceptual background

The research question we ask is the following: why does an internationalised violent dispute, specifically a “new civil war”, continue to remain violent when the actors involved seek a cessation of hostilities? Alternatively, why is there a policy failure even when the goals of the actors involved are aligned? Our hypothesis is that for a detracted internationalised violent dispute, a new civil war, to end hostilities, the mere confluence of goals by the participating actors is insufficient. The methods and policy choices themselves chosen by the actors must also achieve a sufficient critical mass to result in a cessation of hostilities. When the policy choices are conflicting, they off-set each other resulting in a continuation of hostilities and the persistence of a new civil war.

The conflict in Libya post-2011 until 2019 has been chosen to test this hypothesis. The case selection for this research is a single-outcome case study, borrowing from Gerring's design.¹² Single-outcome studies, and ours in particular, are apt in investigating a negative response as well. The lack of the cessation of hostilities is the negative outcome in our case study. The continuation of the new civil war, proxied through the continuation of hostilities, is what we are looking to examine. The selection for the case study is in accordance with what Seawright and Gerring suggest: a most likely case, which represents a cross-case relationship well.¹³

The Libyan conflict is such a case, where we witness a continuation of a new type of civil war that began in 2011. There are numerous actors involved with differing goals, namely: the United States, Russia, China, France, Italy, Germany, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey, making the conflict international. Further, there is a large variety in geographic location of actors involved and between their aggregate power and military capabilities. Further, as we demonstrate, despite this large variety, the specific goal for almost all actors involved was to cease hostilities and to end the Libyan conflict.

But if their goals coincide, namely that the conflict should end, then why do hostilities persist? Our hypothesis is that a mere policy goal confluence of end-state is not a sufficient cause to stop hostilities. Instead, the policies themselves must not be, at the least, off-setting. If they are, which is what we demonstrate here, then the hostilities will continue.

In our analysis, we find it important to distinguish between policy outcomes and policy outputs, or tools employed. For each of the eleven external actors involved, we examine their desired end-state as a policy goal, but also their chosen policy output or tool. After

¹² Gerring, ‘Single-Outcome Studies’.

¹³ Jason Seawright and John Gerring, ‘Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options’, *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no 2 (2008), 299.

this analysis, we will demonstrate how the policy outputs off-set each other, resulting in the continuation of the new civil war.

New civil wars: A brief introduction

Since the end of the bipolar era, the nature of conflicts has undergone significant changes. These changes have prompted the academic world to rethink how we understand different types of conflicts, and the way we interpret the connection between domestic conflict and international relations. The research on the internationalisation of internal conflicts has been given an impetus in the last couple of years, as many current civil wars have undergone a turn towards internationalisation due to foreign actors' interventions.

As Freeman argues, civil wars cannot be understood anymore as being entirely different from international conflicts. Further, a number of scholars – based mainly on the argument of Mary Kaldor – describe a new sort of war which is neither a classic civil war, nor a classic international war. This category is labelled as “new civil wars”. New civil wars are characterised by a multiplicity of types of fighting units both public and private, state and non-state, or some kind of mixture.¹⁴ However, the relevance of the new civil wars thesis is highly debated, its most important criticism is that not the warfare itself changed, but the way we analyse it. The same debate was visible with Kaldor's original distinction between new and old wars. We do not wish to cast judgment on the debate, but merely employ “new civil wars” as a useful analytical framework to study the Libyan crisis.

New civil wars usually raise the issue of state legitimacy and state weakness, as they can relate to larger regional security issues, and involve ethno-religious or communal differences. According to Lobell and Mauceri, as state institutions weaken, particularly if it results in the undermining of pre-existing ethnic power balance, there is a greater likelihood that the conflict can either be diffused to neighbouring states or escalate within the state, thus weak state capacity provides a site of opportunity for internationalisation.¹⁵ As Bennett and Levy lays out, weak rulers often seek international support or cooperation to deal with local security, political or economic problem which leads almost directly to internationalisation.¹⁶ Once an internal conflict draws in external actors, or spreads to neighbouring states (or both), the conflict often becomes more violent, and harder to control and resolve.¹⁷ This applies squarely and is readily observable in the case of Libya, as well.

¹⁴ Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, 92.

¹⁵ Steven E. Lobell and Philip P. Mauceri (eds.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Politics: Explaining Diffusion and Escalation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

¹⁶ Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy, 'Domestic Sources of Alliances and Alignments: The Case of Egypt 1962–1973', *International Organization* 45, no 3 (1991), 369–395.

¹⁷ Michael Brown (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 26; William Zartman, 'Dynamics and Constraints in Negotiations in Internal Conflicts', in *Elusive Peace*, ed. by William Zartman (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), 4.

Freeman's edited book is a fundamental work examining the internalisation of civil wars. The employed typology of interfering actors is closely connected with conflict internationalisation. In our study we accept the definitions introduced by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program which divides actors based on the level of their involvement and their way of interfering in the armed conflict.¹⁸ The main division is between primary parties – directly involved in the conflicts and having formed the incompatibility of warring parties' interests – and secondary parties which are subdivided into further categories. Secondary warring parties support actively one side of the conflict – usually with troops – while secondary non-warring parties (i.e. secondary supporting parties) provide support to the primary party, thus affecting the development of the conflict in a more indirect way than secondary warring parties. Based on this categorisation, external actors can be labelled as either primary or secondary parties in the internationalisation process.

In the case of Libya, we identify three levels of actors participating in some form in the conflict. The conflict *prima facie* has been fought by primary actors with numerous non-state actors, but both secondary warring parties (e.g. Turkey from 2020), and secondary non-warring parties are also present. Further, three levels of internationalisation can be distinguished as well: the interference of great powers, regional/local powers and European powers. The paper focuses on the involvement of states, while the role of international organisations present in Libya is not discussed.¹⁹

In our analysis, we understood internationalisation as the process of involvement of international actors at any stage of a domestic conflict. As from the end of the NATO-led military intervention up until the beginning of 2020 – until Turkey's decision to send troops to Libya – the international actors acted as secondary non-warring parties in our work we analyse their involvement. Within the secondary non-warring parties, we introduce subcategories based on the foreign policy tools (hard–soft) used by external actors. When examining the role of the above-mentioned countries in the ongoing Libyan crisis, Khalifa Haftar's operation against Tripoli (launched in April 2019) has not been concluded by the time our analysis was submitted and as such, we only draw conclusions from before this. Haftar's operation further complicates Libyan domestic politics.

In our analysis, hard foreign policy tools are mainly and primarily a military presence, including the presence of military advisors and Special Forces. We consider economic sanctions as another, more sophisticated form of hard foreign policy tools, while economic aid is characterised as a soft tool. Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power in international relations in the early 1990s. According to this theory, soft power is the ability to attract and persuade. Whereas hard power – the ability to coerce – stems out of a country's military or economic might, soft power arises from the perceived attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals and policies. Hard power remains crucial in a world

¹⁸ Uppsala Universitet, *Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Definitions*, s. a.

¹⁹ About the role and activities of international organisations in the post-Ghaddafi era see Anna Molnár et al., 'Security sector reform by intergovernmental organizations in Libya', *Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies* 14, no 1 (2021), 7–48.

of states trying to guard their independence and of non-state groups willing to turn to violence.²⁰

It is important to note that hard and soft foreign policy tools are at times used in parallel, since they complement each other, and as such, one may at times not exist efficiently without the other. Despite this, we attempt to display the dominant features of the above-mentioned countries' foreign policy tools in Libya. We demonstrate that there is a considerable variety in the policy tools used. Some states use hard foreign policy tools, some soft, and some a combination of both. The policy tools are at times uncoordinated and off-set each other, which hinders the possible cessation of hostilities. In addition to national actors, international organisations also play an important role, but for reasons of brevity this analysis does not examine the role of the European Union and other relevant international organisations.

Great powers

The United States – not leading from behind anymore

The United States has been actively involved in the conflict since its outset, and President Barack Obama described the strategy of the U.S. regarding the Libyan intervention as “leading from behind”.²¹ After the Obama Administration voted to pass UNSCR 1973, the U.S. Air Force participated actively in the ousting of the Gaddafi regime. Later on, however, Barack Obama stated that the intervention in Libya was the worst mistake of his presidency.²² Obama bemoaned the fact that instead of turning into a democracy, the Libyan state's functionality is currently fragile, and the country is close to becoming a failed state. The U.S. policy ever since has been defined by efforts to contain and mitigate the negative effects of state collapse, support transition efforts and resolve conflict, however, the level and extent of U.S. involvement has varied with the use of soft and hard foreign policy tools.²³

Libya will most likely never be one of the top priorities of the U.S. foreign policy agenda, as Libya's geographic position is not particularly important in Washington's geopolitical views, since the U.S. imports only a minor share of Libya's oil. These factors are important primarily for Europeans, and the point of view of the U.S. is that the conflict requires European solution.²⁴ However, Libya remains important for American interests in the Mediterranean and the broader Middle East. A more stable Libya would enhance the position of the U.S.'s European allies, since the migration crisis could be mitigated, and the risks of jihadist criminal groups infiltrating the continent may be lower. However,

²⁰ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

²¹ Kedar Pavgi, 'Barack Obama's Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy*, 17 November 2011.

²² Dominic Tierney, 'The Legacy of Obama's 'Worst Mistake'', *The Atlantic*, 15 April 2016.

²³ Christopher M. Blanchard, 'Libya: Conflict, Transition, and U.S. Policy', *Congressional Research Service*, 2020.

²⁴ Hafed Al-Ghwell, 'The United States Should Not Get Involved in Libya's Civil War', *Atlantic Council*, 14 November 2018.

on their own, Washington's European allies are neither strong, nor united enough to guide developments in Libya, particularly as their attention is centred on the future of the European Union and on Russian influence on NATO's borders.²⁵ A stable Libya is important from the regional allies' (Tunisia, Egypt) point of view, as well. When analysing U.S. involvement in Libya, it is important to note that neither is it in the interest of the U.S. to participate in another armed conflict in the MENA region, nor does it have enough power (capital) to reconcile all stakeholders.²⁶

The U.S. Libya-policy can be divided into five different phases from the beginning of the Arab Spring until 2019 based on the intensity of American involvement. In the first phase – from February to October 2011 – it played a fundamental role in supporting Libyan demonstrators and in the overthrowing of the regime, which was significantly facilitated by the military intervention. The second phase started when the NATO operation terminated after the death of Gaddafi. During this period, the U.S. reinstated its diplomatic presence in Libya and supported the interim authorities. Ambassador Chris Stevens's murder marks the end of this period. The shock caused by his death characterises the third chapter of U.S.–Libya relations between September 2012 and July 2014. This phase ended when the U.S. Embassy in Benghazi was evacuated as a consequence of the outburst of violence in the second Libyan civil war. From July 2014 to January 2017 – the fourth phase – the U.S. supported UN efforts to stabilise Libya, then supported the Government of National Accord (GNA) which was created in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement. In this period the U.S. carried out airstrikes against ISIS strongholds near Sirte. The ongoing fifth phase started in January 2017 and is characterised by the nearly complete disinterest in Libya apart from counterterrorist and counter-insurgency efforts.²⁷ The use of hard foreign policy tools prevailed mostly in the first and the second phases and to a smaller extent during the antiterrorist airstrikes against ISIS strongholds. Every other phase was dominated by soft foreign policy tools. The generalised term of 'a more stable Libya' can be considered a policy outcome for the United States but the wavering use of soft and hard foreign policy tools do not show a consistent line of action. This periodisation of the American involvement reflects not only an incoherent use of policy outputs but also the lack of clear strategic visions of the Obama and Trump administrations.

Starting with his election in 2016, the Trump Administration faced two options: the complete withdrawal from Libya, leaving the stabilisation to other international actors, or the strengthening of its Libyan presence and undertaking of a leading role in the stabilisation process. In the spirit of Trump's non-interventionist "America first!" slogan, from the end of 2017 until August 2019, the Trump Administration did not have an accredited U.S.

²⁵ Ben Fishman, 'The Trump Administration and Libya. The Necessity for Engagement', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policies*, 24 May 2017.

²⁶ Al-Ghwell, 'The United States'.

²⁷ Ben Fishman, 'United States: Reluctant Engagement', in *Foreign Actors in Libya's Crisis*, ed. by Karim Mezran and Arturo Varvelli (Milano: Atlantic Council, Edizione LediPublishing, 2017), 92; Joffé, 'Where does Libya go now?', 4.

Ambassador to Libya.²⁸ The airstrikes against ISIS and the capture of a militant accused of playing an instrumental role in the attack against the Embassy in Benghazi that led to the death of Ambassador Chris Stevens²⁹ were the most visible moments of U.S. involvement in Libya. Apart from these, President Trump has not opted to play a more active role in the Libyan stabilisation. He summarised the standpoint of the U.S. on Libya in an April 2017 press conference with then Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni: “I do not see a role in Libya. I think the United States has, right now, enough roles”. During the press conference, he expressed that except in the counterterrorism arena, the United States will play less of a role in Libya than it did during the Obama Administration.³⁰

The fact that the U.S. has not sought contacts with the dynamically changing Libyan power centres and is still supporting the UN-made GNA reflects the desire of the U.S. Government to limit American involvement. In the meanwhile, other international actors maintained diversified relations with the Libyan fractions. The Serraj Government has the support of the Trump Administration, and Prime Minister Serraj has made several official visits to the U.S. Khalifa Haftar seems to be held at a distance, in spite of their former – alleged – relations. However, in 2018, Washington realised the adverse consequences of its complete withdrawal from Libya. This withdrawal from Libya provided Haftar and Russia an opportunity to assert their influence in the whole country and in consequence rudimentary steps were taken to balance relations with rival power fractions.

It is worth noting that Haftar had close relations with the CIA. An increase of terrorism may force the Trump Administration to deepen its involvement in Libya. If Russia undertakes a more active role in Libya – for example, violating the arms embargo – it can have the same effect on U.S. foreign policy. In this case, Trump has to decide whether to leave Libya – at least partially – to Russia, or to prevent this scenario by taking more responsibility.³¹

In line with Trump’s non-involvement policy, the U.S. withdrew its small diplomatic and anti-terrorist military contingent from Libya after Haftar started his operation against Tripoli in April 2019. However, Trump’s phone call to Haftar not only contradicted Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s statement, but even his own previous Libya policy of backing the GNA. Trump recognised “Field-Marshal Haftar’s significant role in fighting terrorism and securing Libya’s oil resources” while they “discussed a shared vision for Libya’s transition to a stable, democratic political system”.³² The first part could be

²⁸ Donald J. Trump, ‘Presidential Proclamation Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists or Other Public-Safety Threats’, *The White House*, 24 September 2017; Josh Gerstein and Jeremy C. F. Lin, ‘Why these 7 countries are listed on Trump’s travel ban’, *Politico*, 26 June 2018.

²⁹ ABC News, ‘Benghazi: US Navy SEALs capture man suspected over fatal attack on diplomatic post in Libya’, 31 October 2017.

³⁰ Fishman, ‘The Trump Administration’.

³¹ Fishman, ‘United States’, 94.

³² Steve Holland, ‘White House says Trump spoke to Libyan commander Haftar on Monday’, *Reuters*, 19 April 2019.

interpreted as an endorsement of Haftar’s military offensive against Tripoli.³³ When Trump was elected president, many Libya policy analysts assumed that he would prefer Haftar to the GNA, if for no other reason than to contradict Obama’s policy. Trump’s affinity for autocratic strongmen and the coincidence of Haftar’s strong anti-Islamist rhetoric with Trump’s declaration of fighting ISIS and privileging counterterrorism also strengthened these views;³⁴ however, within the timeframe of our analysis very little has changed in the U.S. Libya policy compared with the Obama era.

As airstrikes against ISIS strongholds near Sirte and the withdrawal of U.S. military forces demonstrate, the U.S. has been using hard foreign policy tools in Libya, however, the use of soft tools – as a sign of its disinterest – is also present.

These trends continue more or less unchanged; however, the role of the U.S. in Libya is far from determined. It is important to note here that the most powerful actor has not clearly coordinated its policy tools with the other actors, resorting to policies increasingly in a unilateral manner, and continuing to state that the conflict requires European solutions.³⁵

People’s Republic of China – The economic actor

The second major global power and a rising regional hegemon, the People’s Republic of China aimed to be a determinant economic actor in Gaddafi’s Libya. It focused primarily on oil extraction, but Gaddafi tried to keep China away from this sector. At the same time, the Chinese presence in the building industry was significant, and infrastructural and telecommunication investments flowed to the country. Estimates indicate that the events of the Arab Spring caused a cc. 20 billion USD loss to the Chinese economy in 2011. Several billion USD contracts signed by *China Railway* (transport sector), *Sinohydro* and *China State Construction Engineering* (real estate investments) were annulled.³⁶

If we examine Beijing’s behaviour during the escalation of the Libyan crisis from a political point of view, a decisive foreign policy shift can be observed. China acted as a responsible great power, demonstrated by its focus on the evacuation of Chinese guest workers (approximately 35,000 people together with other foreign nationals), or through its pragmatist attitude in the UN Security Council. For example, China voted for UNSCR 1970 about the embargo and contributed to the international military intervention by abstaining from the vote about UNSCR 1973. These contradicted sharply with the principle of non-interference, a staple policy supported by China. But the People’s Republic of China is risk averse: relations with the new Libyan leaders and fractions have been established pragmatically, in line with China’s economic interests. According to Parello-Plesner and

³³ Samer Al-Atrush et al., ‘Trump Backed Libyan Strongman’s Attack on Tripoli, US Officials Say’, *Bloomberg*, 24 April 2019.

³⁴ Mieczysław P. Boduszynski, *US Democracy Promotion in the Arab World. Beyond Interests vs. Ideals* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2019).

³⁵ Al-Ghwell, ‘The United States’.

³⁶ Máté Szakáli, ‘Szafarin a Sárkány: Kína befektetései Afrikában’, *Külgügyi Szemle* 3, (2015), 85–86.

Mathieu Duchâtel, the interventionist approach in Chinese foreign policy is more an adjustment to events than the consolidated result of a designed grand strategy.³⁷

Despite its appeal for national unity and its rhetorical support of UN mediation, China has not been proactive within Libya. Instead, China's behaviour has been rather reactive, as is evidenced in August 2014 when Beijing responded to the events in Libya with evacuating 900 Chinese nationals.³⁸

It is possible to consider Beijing's major policy outcome the need of stability, characterised by an adequate public security and predictability in Libya in order to foster its economic interests. Figuratively, for the Chinese administration sustaining Libya's integrity is important on both due to its own Taiwan policy, and due to discourage intra-PRC separatist aspirations from their ethnic territories. China uses its economic power to create policy output in the Libyan new civil war context; in July 2018, at the China – Arab States Cooperation Forum President Xi Jinping announced a 20 billion USD loan for the reconstruction of infrastructures.³⁹ However, we predict that Chinese investments/loans will arrive to Libya only after a new, functioning national government is formed after general elections were held in the country under UN supervision.

China's efforts are sufficient by themselves to examine this set of the events, even if after the Munich Security Conference in February 2019, Foreign Minister Vang Ji talked with President Serraj about the possibility of largescale Chinese investments. The investments would be realised in the framework of the *One Belt One Road Initiative* (OBOR), and in the summer of 2018, a memorandum of understanding was signed by which Libya would join OBOR. Libyan ports will be of primary importance for the PRC either for the Chinese Silk Road or for the economic control over the Mediterranean Sea.⁴⁰

China's post-2011 economic Libyan presence is built upon the experiences acquired during the Arab Spring. If necessary, China will protect its facilities and guest workers by arms – there is a reason that a bilateral security package was developed parallel to OBOR. In the summer of 2018, China organised the 1st China–Africa Defence and Security Forum with the participation of the African Union and 49 African states. It seems probable that besides its economic involvement in Africa, China will participate in international military and police cooperation as well, even after the civil war ended. Taking into consideration the fast modernisation of the Chinese Navy and the creation of a military base in Djibouti, there is a possibility that China will aspire to build similar presence and influence over the Mediterranean Sea.

³⁷ Jonas Parello-Plesner and Mathieu Duchâtel, 'International rescue: Beijing's mass evacuation from Libya', *Adelphi Series* 54, no 451 (2014), 107; Anastasia Shesterinina, 'Evolving norms of protection: China, Libya and the problem of intervention in armed conflict', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, no 3 (2016), 812.

³⁸ Guy Burton, 'Chinese Conflict Management in Libya, Syria and Yemen after the Arab Uprisings', *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 13, no 1 (2019), 24.

³⁹ China Daily, 'Highlights of Xi's speech at China–Arab forum', 10 July 2018; Giorgio Cuscito, 'La Cina tornerà in Libia', *Limes Online*, 27 July 2018.

⁴⁰ Lorenzo Lamperti, 'Cina pronta a investire in Libia. Così Pechino può salvare Africa (ed Europa)', *Affari Italiani*, 18 February 2019; Safa Alharathy, 'Libya joins China's Belt and Road Initiative', *The Libya Observer*, 13 July 2018.

In spite of its official support for the GNA, through investments (e.g. construction of infrastructure, housing, hospitals, etc.) China has provided indirect support for Haftar, as well, thus its economic interest arguably contributed to the undermining of any political resolution of the crisis; as a consequence amongst scholars, its role within the Libyan crisis is rather ambiguous. The Chinese policy outcome could be multilateral peace initiatives in which framework Beijing would not have a leading role but in the meantime could ensure enough stability for economic investments in the country. It can be observed that China has not concretised any tangible support in hard power outputs for the GNA.

The 2011 ‘withdrawal’ of the U.S. and Europe from the region created a power vacuum that China tries to fill with increasing efforts. China’s geopolitical interests require the PRC to intervene in Libyan domestic politics firmly; however, primarily with the use of soft foreign policy tools.⁴¹ Regarding Haftar’s April offensive, China is playing a waiting game, insisting that the signed business agreements cannot be endangered. All the while Beijing takes considerable steps in reaching its policy outcome by getting closer to Europe through its deepening involvement in Africa and in the WANA region (West Asia and North Africa). Thus, its products gain access to European markets more easily (if the products arrive directly from Chinese factories in Africa) and a bigger share of energy sector, investments, commerce and market could be realised in a region which traditionally used to be the sphere of influence of European middle powers.

The PRC’s involvement, to secure its own national interests, is unilateral in choice of policy tools. The increased economic involvement is done on a bilateral China–Libya basis, excluding the other actors. For example, the OBOR–Libya Memorandum of Understanding would not have been unanimously supported by the other actors involved in the conflict. This, while resulting in quite possibly better economic terms for the PRC, results in no coordination between the actors and the continuation of hostilities in spite of a confluence of stated policy outcomes.

Russia

Russia was a key partner of Libya before the Arab Spring, but it has gradually lost its key position in the region. The Libyan crisis gave opportunity to restore Russia to its previous role, with a stated geopolitical aim to reach a “Warm Sea” port and to obtain military bases in the Mediterranean region. During the Cold War and later between 2004 and 2011, the relationship between Russia and Libya was determined mainly by arms and energy issues.⁴²

Russia was one of the sharpest critics of the 2011 NATO intervention, even though Moscow did not veto UNSCR 1973, the resolution that constituted the legal basis of the intervention. Although Russian authorities did not support the Gaddafi regime in Libya

⁴¹ See also Jian Junbo and Álvaro Méndez, ‘Change and Continuity in Chinese Foreign Policy: China’s Engagement in the Libyan Civil War as a Case Study’, *LSE Global South Unit Working Paper Series*, no 5 (2015).

⁴² Andrea Beccaro, ‘Russia: Looking for a Warm Sea’, in *Foreign Actors in Libya’s Crisis*, ed. by Karim Mezran and Arturo Varvelli (Milano: Atlantic Council, Edizione LediPublishing, 2017), 91–111.

in 2011 and President Dmitry Medvedev suggested that Gaddafi lost its legitimacy, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin compared the NATO's intervention to a medieval crusade.⁴³ Russia considered the chaos provoked by the NATO intervention a perfect example of the instability generated by U.S.-led interventions. Using this opportunity, Russia tried to convey the image “that what the US breaks, Russia can fix” and promoted this image in and out of Russia as well.⁴⁴

Russia did not react immediately to the Libyan protests. The National Transitional Council (NTC) was recognised by Moscow only after it announced that every contract signed under the Gaddafi era will be respected. However, after the revolution, when it seemed that pro-Western powers might come into power, the Kremlin changed its Libya strategy. Russia's Libya policy differed from their Syria policy, since Russian national interests were more in line with the interests of the international community. As such, cooperation was dominant with other international actors, but this cooperation was only surface-deep. Despite this cooperation, the possibility that Russia might obtain ports and military bases in Libya worried the West. According to Andrea Beccaro, Moscow was encouraged “to implement a more active foreign policy in the region based on military, diplomatic, and economic means in order to counterbalance Western influence”.⁴⁵

Within the timeframe of our analysis, Moscow officially recognised and supported the UN-brokered GNA in Tripoli, and the idea of a unified Libyan state, but did not reopen its embassy in the country. Even so, it remains one of the main supporters of General Haftar and Tobruk. Haftar regularly visits Russia, where he is received as a foreign leader already in office, and where he meets with high-ranking Russian officials.⁴⁶ In 2016, Russia not only printed about cc. 3 billion USD for the pro-Haftar Central Bank of Libya in Bayda,⁴⁷ but through its military advisors, Russia actively participates in the modernisation of the Haftar-led Libyan National Army (LNA). As an example of said participation, some LNA officers are regularly trained in Russia. In return, Haftar promised to create two Russian military bases in Tobruk and in Benghazi.⁴⁸ In 2017, Russian aircraft carrier, Admiral Kuznetsov hosted Haftar close to the Libyan coast. However, under formal diplomatic rules, Russia is committed to observing the rule of equal treatment of both parties.

There is evidence that Russia uses hard foreign policy tools in Libya economically and militarily as well. According to British and American sources, Russia has been supplying weapons to Haftar through Egypt and the UAE, and since the end of 2015, Russian PMCs are protecting factories near Bengasi and providing demining equipment to Haftar's forces.

According to certain reports, mercenaries of the Russian Wagner Group have been backing the LNA from 2018.⁴⁹ Despite its substantial backing of the LNA, Moscow has

⁴³ Yulia Krylova, ‘Lock-in effect in the Russian–Libyan economic relations in the post-Arab Spring period’, *The Journal of North African Studies* 22, no 4 (2017), 579.

⁴⁴ Lincoln Pigman and Kyle Orton, ‘Inside Putin's Libyan Power Play’, *Foreign Policy*, 14 September 2017.

⁴⁵ Beccaro, ‘Russia’.

⁴⁶ Anna Maria Dyer, ‘Russia's Libya Policy’, *PISM Bulletin*, 6 (1252) 15 January 2019.

⁴⁷ Aidan Lewis, ‘Separate banknotes symbols of Libyan disunity, financial disarray’, *Reuters*, 03 June 2016.

⁴⁸ Dyer, ‘Russia's Libya Policy’, 2.

⁴⁹ The Libya Observer, ‘300 Russian mercenaries fighting for warlord Khalifa Haftar in Libya, western news reports say’, 04 March 2019.

avoided expressing full and open support for Haftar's army, hoping instead to perform the role of a mediator and gain substantial advantages from all parties to the conflict.

In order to keep its options open, Russia has started to support Gaddafi's most reformist living son, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and Aref Ali Nayed.⁵⁰ Nayed is close to Haftar and both of them envision an important role for Russia in case they come to power.

Haftar's significant, but not exclusive support is vital for Russia from economic, military and international political points of view as well. Firstly, if Haftar seized power, revenues from the contracts with his regime could cover the losses sustained during the Arab Spring.⁵¹ Secondly, supporting Haftar enables Russia to strengthen its military presence in the Mediterranean Sea. This would result in Russian power projection capabilities being closer to Europe, to the Middle East and North Africa. Back in 2008, Russia planned on opening a naval base in Gaddafi's Libya, but that project did not come to fruition.⁵² In case Russia had another opportunity to open a naval base in Libya, Moscow could expand its influence over the region, further increasing Western worries. Although the Russian foreign policy is dominated by hard foreign policy tools, Russia uses soft foreign policy tools as well. For example, Gazprom would like to regain its previous position in Libya, and talks with the Libyan National Oil Company started in 2018. The competition with Western (mainly European) companies is also predictable in this field.⁵³ Russia supports not only Haftar, but the GNA and Misratan militias as well, since Haftar's future role is far from being certain. Cooperation with the EU regarding Libya enables Russia to exploit the existing disagreements amongst EU member states and to map the balance of power amongst them regarding foreign policy issues. This strategy enables Russia to choose "weaker" member states and test them as regards much pressure they are willing to exert on Russia regarding the Ukraine crisis.⁵⁴ By backing Haftar, Moscow also hopes to seize control over a critical refugee transit route to Europe. Moscow's eventual stronghold in Libya may fulfil an important goal in its European disintegration and destabilisation policy.⁵⁵ Expanding Russian influence within the region, dividing Europeans through involvement in Libya are important policy outcomes for Moscow that have a significance beyond its strict sense Libyan interest.

At the Palermo Conference in November 2018, it became explicitly clear that Russia regained its previous influence in Libya and played an important role to convince General Haftar to participate in the conference.⁵⁶ It also became evident for Western powers that Russia wants to play a significant role in the Libyan stabilisation process and it is

⁵⁰ Henry Meyer, 'Russia Supports Political Role for Qaddafi's Wanted Son in Libya', *Bloomberg*, 24 December 2018; Maxim Suchkov, 'Analysis: Reports on Russian troops in Libya spark controversy', *Al-Monitor*, 12 October 2018.

⁵¹ Pigman and Orton, 'Inside Putin's Libyan Power Play'.

⁵² Tom Parfitt, 'Gadafy offers Russia a naval base in Libya', *The Guardian*, 01 November 2008.

⁵³ Dyner, 'Russia's Libya Policy', 2.

⁵⁴ Nikolay Kozhanov, 'Moscow's Presence in Libya Is a New Challenge for the West', *Chatham House*, 30 May 2017.

⁵⁵ Warsaw Institute, 'Civil War in Libya. Russian Goals and Foreign Policy', 30 April 2019.

⁵⁶ Nona Mikhelidze, 'Italy Sidelined As Russia Consolidates Position in Libya', *IAI Commentaries*, 25 June 2019.

impossible to make decisions without Russia's participation. In order to fulfil this role, Russia has been willing to invest economically and financially as well.

On the whole, Moscow is able to influence the Libyan situation and has a wide range of opportunity in Libya, ranging from mediating amongst rival fractions to the deepening of the military crises. From Moscow's point of view, the optimal solution would be if a functioning coalition government was created. This coalition government could then guarantee the stabilisation needed to secure Russian long-term investments and military facilities which we consider the main Russian policy outcome regarding strictly Libya. Russia is officially open to establishing contact with any Libyan fractions that are involved to ensure a stronger position for Moscow, regardless the outcome of the stabilisation process, thus all players are equal, but some are more equal than others.⁵⁷ This policy of pseudo-neutrality can be observed in the Russian reactions given to Haftar's operation in April 2019, when, according to several diplomatic sources, Russian aircraft have been observed in Bengasi. At the same time Russia did not support the UNSCR draft that blamed Haftar for the new flare-up in violence. Further, Russia officially announced that it did not support Haftar's offensive.⁵⁸

The policies above are evidence that lend credence to Andrei Chuprygin's argument that Russia – as opposed to the United States – was not party to a significant portion of the policy action and event in the MENA region between 2001 and 2014. This, however, resulted in Russia not being a party to the diplomatic and military mistakes that the U.S. committed, either. Moscow is now using this fact to its advantage by emphasising the inadequacy of the Western community's policy in the region. Without the liberal proliferation doctrine of the Western community, Russia hopes that it can be a preferred partner to the regimes of the MENA region. While the offer may be credible from Russia's standpoint, Moscow can only offer the MENA regimes limited economic support.

Russian policy outcomes and tools use more nuanced soft policy tools, coupled with a fair amount of diplomatic rhetoric. Despite its neutral rhetoric hard foreign policy tools are mainly used to support Haftar and his army. The policy tools are uncoordinated with the rest of the international community, mainly due to the fact that Russia was noticeably quasi-absent between 2001 and 2014 from the region. The desired end-state is more complicated for Moscow, as it has to weigh the potential politico-military gains of warm sea ports and bases with the possible losses on the economic front a protracted conflict brings. Succeeding in Libya would not only secure long-term investments for Russia, but it also provides opportunity to divide Europeans and to raise its profile in the region, thus the stakes (policy outcomes) are high for Moscow.

⁵⁷ Maxim Suchkov, 'Moscow cultivates neutral image as Libya quakes', *Eurasian Strategies*, 10 April 2019.

⁵⁸ Michelle Nichols, 'U.S., Russia say cannot support a U.N. call for Libya truce: diplomats', *Reuters*, 19 April 2019; Middle East Monitor, 'Russia disowns Libya's General Haftar', 06 April 2019.

European states

France

Perhaps the most interested European party, France followed the 2011 Libyan crisis and the ensuing international responses with a keen interest. Firstly, then President Nicolas Sarkozy saw an opportunity to improve his weak foreign policy balance before the upcoming presidential elections.⁵⁹ France aimed to expand its influence over the North African region. And finally, on the economic front, since Libyan export amounted to 18% French crude oil import (in 2010), Sarkozy aimed to obtain a larger share of Libyan oil.⁶⁰ As such, the Libyan crisis was a significant opportunity for France to re-evaluate its military policies across the globe, and it is important to note that many times the covert military presence prevailed.

Attempting to maximise the potential gains from the situation, France and the United Kingdom supported the drafting of UNSCR 1973, and the resolution was approved on 17 March 2011. It is important to note that France was the first country to initiate a military intervention.⁶¹ On 18 March, French President Nicolas Sarkozy authorised unilateral French strikes against Gaddafi's forces. The resulting new civil war thus can be seen as a 'war born in Paris'.⁶²

On 10 March 2011, France was the first state to recognise the newly created National Transitional Council. The recognition came prior to the European Council summit about the Libyan crisis, and the timing of the French recognition was another stain on French foreign policy.⁶³ *Operation Southern Mistral*, initially conceived as a war game, was carried out between 21 to 25 March 2011 under French–British cooperation. Due to the escalation of the Libyan crisis, the operation was carried out as part of the NATO intervention, not as a war game.⁶⁴ The coalition intervention was led by France at the beginning. This was later followed by *Operation Unified Protector* which also had a significant contribution from France. The operation is known to the French public as *Opération Harmattan*.⁶⁵ The results of the French participation were two-fold: politically Paris made efforts to preserve its influence within Libya, and diplomatic relations were continuous even during the most turbulent moments of the crisis. (Currently this stability seems to have come to an end. In April 2019, the UN backed GNA suspended cooperation with France, accusing Paris of

⁵⁹ Jolyon Howorth, '“Opération Harmattan” in Libya: a paradigm shift in French, European and transatlantic security arrangements?', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 12, no 4 (2014), 409.

⁶⁰ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 'Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options', 14 September 2016, 10–11; OEC, 'Where does France import Crude Petroleum from?', 27 September 2010.

⁶¹ Jason W. Davidson, 'France, Britain and the intervention in Libya: an integrated analysis', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no 2 (2013), 315.

⁶² Howorth, 'Opération Harmattan', 409.

⁶³ Madelene Lindström and Kristina Zetterlund, 'Setting the Stage for the Military Intervention in Libya', 17 October 2012.

⁶⁴ Michel Chossudovsky, 'When War Games Go Live: “Staging” a “Humanitarian War” against “SOUTHLAND”', *Global Research*, 16 April 2011.

⁶⁵ Ministère des Armées, 'L'opération Harmattan', 27 September 2011.

backing Haftar's rebel forces).⁶⁶ France's economic objectives were not achieved, as the dominance of the Libyan oil market by France was not realised. In fact, on the contrary, French crude oil imports from Libya decreased by a third by 2017, never reaching its pre-crisis level.⁶⁷ France's Libya policy has not changed in any significant manner since 2011. Three major policies form France's over-arching strategy: 1. a strategy based on respecting UN decisions; 2. a strategy based on the use of hard foreign policy tools, projecting the country's Sahel–Sahara strategy to Libya (counterterrorism, preventing the spread of radicalisation, ensuring primacy for France in this region); and 3. a strategy safeguarding French economic interests.⁶⁸

France has recognised the UN-brokered GNA and participated in the UN-led mediation process to stabilise Libya. As a part of this process, Paris hosted a highly visible conference on Libya in 2017 without inviting Italy, its most important European partner in that country,⁶⁹ evidence of the fact that open rivalry between these two European powers has been increasing. Even so France has been covertly backing Khalifa Haftar since 2015, and France's support for the GNA is hardly genuine. Haftar's covert support became evident when Paris was forced to acknowledge the presence of its Special Forces in Libya after a helicopter-crash in Bengasi.⁷⁰ This meant that the visible soft diplomatic tools (e.g. Libya conference) are significantly accompanied by covert hard foreign policy tools.

A French aircraft operation was launched in the Northern regions of Chad in April 2019, exactly at the time when Haftar started his operation in southwest Libya and took control over the major oil production wells.⁷¹ This area is close to the Northern borders of Chad and Niger, where French troops are stationed within the framework of Operation Barkan. This means that a large number of French troops are present in the immediate vicinity of Libya, probably not officially on Libyan territory.

French Libya policy is certainly pro-peace, yet this conceptually is best understood as France's desire for a stable Libya with strong French relations, and not as necessarily democratic outcome for Libya. This concept was embodied by General Haftar, who controls the majority of the oil production and accepts Paris's help. Libya's economic relations with France could be strengthened if the general will be pursued and be successful in his operation against Tripoli. This would mean that France would be able to achieve its ultimate goal in Libya: being a more influential ally to the Libyan power than Italy or any other international actor. Currently France is in a delicate situation: by backing Haftar its positive image has been eroded within the GNA, so Paris is no longer interested in the long-term survival of the Serraj Government. If the GNA survives Haftar's attack and

⁶⁶ Alice Tidey, 'Libya's UN-backed government suspends cooperation with France, accuses it of backing rebel forces', *Euronews*, 19 April 2019.

⁶⁷ OEC, 'Where does France import Crude Petroleum from?', 27 September 2017.

⁶⁸ Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, 'France, committed to assisting the countries of the Sahel', 25 November 2015; Malek Bachir, 'Les «trois politiques» de la France en Libye', *Middle East Eye*, 25 July 2017.

⁶⁹ Paul Taylor, 'France's double game in Libya', *Politico*, 17 April 2019.

⁷⁰ World Bulletin, 'French special forces withdraw from Libya's Benghazi', 11 August 2016.

⁷¹ Alcyone Wemaëre, 'L'intervention militaire française au nord du Tchad pose question', *France 24*, 07 February 2019.

remains in power, France's chances to achieve its political and economic objectives will be reduced significantly.⁷²

Italy – A traditional player in Libya

Rivalry among certain European powers – Italy, France, the United Kingdom – had been present in Libyan territory since the colonial era, but it ended after Gaddafi came into power and his regime became isolated internationally. In the 1990s, Italy gained a relative advantage in diplomatic and economic relations, which peaked in 2008, when the Bengasi Treaty (Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation) was signed. The treaty created 'privileged relations' between the two countries, and one of its main objectives was to stop illegal migration⁷³ which still constitutes the base for bilateral relations.

In spite of its initial political hesitation, Italy participated in the military intervention of 2011 from the beginning. Strong economic relations, obligations deriving from the Bengasi Treaty and good personal relations between Gaddafi and then Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi all contributed to Italy's initial hesitation. At the end of April, after heated political discussions, the Berlusconi Government announced its direct participation in the bombings.⁷⁴ As the British and French influence grew in Libya, Italian – primarily economic – interests were damaged, and the Italian policy output was declared: Rome has been trying to restore its leading role with both soft and hard foreign policy tools.

After the Gaddafi regime was ousted, Italy's main concern was halting the irregular migration flow from Libya. Berlusconi's government was followed by Mario Monti's technocrat government which quickly signed an agreement with the new Libyan 'government' to stop irregular migration – together with other international actors.

The Lampedusa tragedy in October 2013 led the government to launch the *Mare Nostrum* humanitarian-military mission.⁷⁵ Since Italy was unable to handle the crises at its own, Rome was interested in strengthening European instruments. It advocated the launch of FRONTEX operation TRITON from the beginning, then the launch of EUNAVFORMED Sophia (an EU CSDP operation) which expanded its mandate to train and equip the Libyan Coast Guard.⁷⁶

In recent years Italy has been backing the reinforcement of the internationally recognised Libyan Government (i.e. the GNA) with every soft and hard foreign policy

⁷² Taylor, 'France's double game'.

⁷³ Legge 6 febbraio 2009, n. 7. Ratifica ed esecuzione del Trattato di amicizia, partenariato e cooperazione tra la Repubblica italiana e la Grande Giamahiria araba libica popolare socialista, fatto a Bengasi il 30 agosto 2008. *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, no 40, 18 February 2009.

⁷⁴ Ben Lombardi, 'The Berlusconi Government and Intervention in Libya', *The International Spectator, Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 46, no 4 (2011), 31–44; Osvaldo Croci and Marco Valigi, 'Continuity and change in Italian foreign policy: the case of the international intervention in Libya', *Contemporary Italian Politics* 5, no 1 (2013), 38–54.

⁷⁵ Ministero della Difesa, 'Mare Nostrum', s. a.

⁷⁶ Anna Molnár, 'Az EUNAVFOR MED Sophia művelet', in *Az Európai Unió mediterrán térséggel összefüggő kapcsolata. Párbeszéd és konfliktusok* ed. by Anna Molnár and Orsolya Komlósi (Budapest: Dialóg Campus, 2019), 95–123.

tools at its disposal. On a Libyan request, in September 2016 Rome established a 300 men military hospital (Operation Hippocrates) in Misurata in order to support forces fighting against ISIS, while Italian Special Forces have been present in Libya since 2016.⁷⁷ The fact that irregular migration flows are deeply intertwined with new and old Italian organised crime groups poses a significant challenge to the government, thus in August 2017 Italy decided to directly support the Libyan Coast Guard with two ships of its own Navy. Further, in September a military mission with cc. 100 Italian civil guards (*carabinieri*) was decided to be deployed to the Southern borders of Libya.

In addition to European, bilateral and international instruments have been used by the Italian Government. When the UNHCR announced its return to Libya and its will to establish new refugee camps, Italy wasted no time to announce its support. It is important to note that in February 2017 Italy signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the GNA regarding migration.⁷⁸ These efforts can succeed in the long term only if Libya is unified again under a functioning central government – with the help of international actors, and the current complicated power relations would settle and the security environment would stabilise.

Economic relations with Libya have remained decisive in bilateral relations in spite of the deteriorating security environment. In 2017 Libya was the 5th trade partner of Italy amongst African states. ENI – which has been present in Libyan since 1959 – has been a dominant actor in the Libyan energy sector.⁷⁹

Italy organised an international Libya conference (*For Libya With Libya*) which took place on 12–13 November 2018, in Palermo. Although Italy made great efforts to organise the conference, great powers were not represented at the highest level, only ministerial delegations were sent to Sicily, however, the most important Libyan leaders (Fayez el-Serraj, Agilah Saleh, Khaled al-Misri and Khalifa Haftar) were present, thus bi- and multilateral talks were held with their participation. The participants agreed to hold another conference to prepare for next year's Libyan elections. Even though the majority of experts praised its diplomatic importance, the Palermo conference failed to fulfil expectations: in April 2019 a civil war situation emerged in Libya again.⁸⁰

From the beginning of the crisis, Italy has been actively using a combination of soft and hard foreign policy tools, including military ones. Its principal foreign policy interest is the stabilisation of the Libyan domestic and security policy environment. In order to achieve this objective, Italy needs European and transatlantic partners, since Rome is not able to settle the Libyan situation on its own. However, currently the United States is not willing to use military forces. Further, France's Libyan interests are mainly opposite to Italian ones. The already strained Italo–French relations were exacerbated by the fact that since September 2018 the Italian Government have been openly blaming French President

⁷⁷ Esercito, 'Operazione Ippocrate, Schieramento di un ospedale da campo in Libia,' 2017; Sergio Rame, 'Forze speciali italiane in Libia: ecco il documento top secret', *Il Giornale*, 10 August 2016.

⁷⁸ La Repubblica, 'Migranti: accordo Italia–Libia, il testo del memorandum', 02 February 2017.

⁷⁹ Ambasciata D'Italia Tripoli, 'Relazioni economiche Italia–Libia', s. a.

⁸⁰ Arturo Varvelli, 'Libia: conferenza di Palermo, il bilancio dell'Italia', *Affari Internazionali*, 12 December 2018.

Emmanuel Macron for the deterioration of the Libyan situation, claiming that Haftar gained power due to significant French support.⁸¹

After Haftar launched his operation in April 2019, Italy preferred to find a diplomatic solution, rather than military one. In order to achieve this, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte held telephone conversations with the Russian and the Tunisian presidents. According to experts, the improvement of Italian–Russian relations during the first Conte Government may contribute to the further increase of Russian influence in the region.⁸² Even though Rome aimed to take a leading role in the settlement of the Libyan crisis, this would be impossible without French cooperation. In this regard, the fact that French and Italian foreign ministers issued a joint statement about the need for an immediate ceasefire and resuming peace talks within the framework of the UN-led process is a progress.⁸³ In September 2019, the second Conte Government was sworn in, and despite the composition of the new government (Lega was replaced by the leftist Democratic Party), Italian foreign policy became less militant rhetorically and the main features of its Libya policy remained constant: Italy is still campaigning for a political solution. While more and more secondary non-warring parties begin to use increasingly harder foreign policy tools or became secondary-warring party, Italy continues to employ to mainly soft foreign policy tools. As a consequence, at the beginning of 2020 Italy is losing ground in Libya and its once significant influence over its ex-colony is fading. As we note here, the soft foreign policy tools were again not coordinated with the other international actors, as the economic relations are on significantly bilateral level, and the domestic political Italo–French debate precludes further alignment of policies. A stable, united and secure Libya can be considered a policy outcome of Italy in Libya.

Germany – The donor country

The German foreign policy is rather different from the above mentioned French and Italian policies, as it follows a decisive pro-soft-power, non-militaristic approach. This is due in no small part to Germany's role in World War I and II. Since the end of the Cold War, German foreign policy behaviour has been challenged on numerous fronts and Germany was obliged to participate more actively in international peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions.⁸⁴

In sharp contrast to its traditional allies, Germany did not vote for UNSCR 1970 about the no-fly zone. Instead, by abstaining, it found itself in the company of China and Russia. Since decision making was soon moved from the European Council to NATO, Germany

⁸¹ La Repubblica, 'Libia, Conte e Salvini: "No a interventi militari"', 03 September 2018.

⁸² Maria Grazia Rutigliano, 'Conte: Italia, Russia e Tunisia respingono una soluzione militare in Libia', *LUISS*, 02 May 2019.

⁸³ Ministero degli Affari esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 'Dichiarazione congiunta del Ministro dell'Europa e degli affari esteri, Jean-Yves Le Drian, e del Ministro degli affari esteri e della cooperazione internazionale, Enzo Moavero Milanesi', 13 May 2019.

⁸⁴ Jessica Bucher et al., 'Domestic politics, news media and humanitarian intervention: why France and Germany diverged over Libya', *Europea Security* 22, no 4 (2013), 528.

could not participate in the settling of the Libyan conflict with negotiations and non-military coercive measures which have been its preferred foreign policy tools since the unification.⁸⁵ The abstention from the vote – and from the military intervention – protected Germany's credibility in the eyes of the Libyans. Unlike the intervening countries, and since Germany does not have particular interests in the Libyan energy sector, Berlin could act as an independent mediator more credibly than others.⁸⁶ When Haftar launched its attack against Tripoli in April 2019, Germany was chairing the Security Council and convoked an emergency session immediately. Yet Germany's reactions carry much less weight when compared to the other analysed countries. This does not come as a surprise: Berlin consistently has been using soft foreign policy tools since the crisis broke out. Further, Germany has been backing the GNA since it was created in the framework of the UN-led stabilisation process, German diplomatic efforts do not vary with the changing Libyan power relations. We have to highlight the fact that the UN-led stabilisation process was chaired by German diplomat Martin Koebbler. Unlike France and Italy, Berlin is not trying to negotiate neither with Haftar, nor with the militias, its only Libyan interlocutor is the GNA.

Even though politically Germany was not a relevant actor in Libya, it played a significant role as a donor country. The majority (cc. 200 million EUR) of its 233 million EUR donation to Libya in 2017 was envisioned for handling migration, including the settling of Libyan internally displaced persons.⁸⁷ Since neutrality is the guiding principle of German donations, the whole Libyan territory is receiving support, no matter which group rules them. In addition, donations arrive directly to local communities. Since Germany has no colonial history with the Maghreb region, its foreign policy relies mostly on its rather limited economic relations.⁸⁸

Apart from economic donations, Germany's most important policy output to the current Libyan situation has been its mediation activities, also a soft tool. Berlin does not mediate between the warring domestic groups in Libya but their foreign backers. The German Government is widely seen as the perfect arbiter in the conflict, given its neutrality, its relatively good relationships with all the secondary parties involved in Libya, its status as the leading donor in Libya, and its prominence in European politics.⁸⁹

On the whole, Germany does not participate actively in the political dialogue about Libya's future. German policy is that Libyans have to decide their own future. In the meanwhile, Germany supports the Libyan stabilisation with mainly soft, economic tools. A stable and secure Libya can be considered a German policy outcome of the Libyan

⁸⁵ Inez von Weitershausen et al., 'A 'Primus Inter Pares' in EU Foreign Policy? – German Leadership in the European Council during the Libyan and Ukrainian Crises', *German Politics*, 29, no 1 (2020), 42–58.

⁸⁶ Thomas Paulsen (ed.), *The Berlin Pulse. German Foreign Policy in Perspective* (Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung, 2017), 27.

⁸⁷ Michael Cousins, 'Germany continues to lead foreign financial support for Libya', *Libya Herald*, 03 January 2018.

⁸⁸ Bucher et al. 'Domestic politics', 528.

⁸⁹ René Wildanger and Tarek Megerisi, 'Germany's quiet leadership on the Libyan war', *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 20 November 2019.

crisis, since 80–90% of irregular migrants arriving to Europe through Libya aim to reach Germany as final destination.⁹⁰

Egypt – An eternal supporter of the Eastern part

The only country of our study with a contiguous land boundary with Libya is Egypt. For Egypt, the stabilisation of Libya is a primary objective of its foreign policy, as Egyptian security is challenged by the post-intervention situation. Egypt underwent the events of the Arab Spring much like Libya, but the events after the revolts drove the two countries in different directions. However, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's geopolitical visions go beyond creating a secure border zone: Egypt is trying to balance amongst American, Chinese and Russian influence. Sisi's Nasser-like political actions⁹¹ are developing relations with great powers in line with Egyptian interests and the maintenance of independent Egyptian geopolitics. The stability in Cairo – even at the expense of authoritarianism – currently matches the interests of the great powers and the European Union. Egypt uses a dual framing regarding the Libyan problem: on the one hand, it considers the current situation a consequence of an unfinished Responsibility to Protect UN intervention, but on the other hand, it considers it a part of a regional war against Islamist terrorism.⁹²

Cairo has been a firm supporter of Khalifa Haftar for a long time. Ambiguous is the support of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi (the youngest living son of the late Muammar Gaddafi); several sources consider him a covert Egyptian advocate who will probably run in the upcoming elections, while his unofficial Russian support is also probable.⁹³ Egypt's Libya policy is influenced significantly both by al-Sisi's domestic policy objectives and by Egypt's foreign policy manoeuvrability. With the support of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, Egypt's goal is to exclude the Muslim Brotherhood from power, not only in Egypt, but in the neighbouring Libya as well. This is the reason why Haftar, with his strong anti-Islamist rhetoric, has been benefitting from Cairo's support. In spite of the international arms embargo, Egypt and Russia have been backing Haftar's forces with arms, soldiers, intelligence information and logistics. The Egyptian policy output is clear and declared. In fact, Libya was the first foreign theatre where Egyptian troops were deployed after the Gulf War.⁹⁴ Egypt accused Qatar and Turkey of arming Haftar and of deepening the already complex crisis. Haftar met al-Sisi in Cairo only a week after Haftar had launched its offensive against Tripoli.⁹⁵

Its policy outcome could be defined to be Libya's stabilisation, territorial unity and its public security (at least in the Eastern part of the country) which would have significant

⁹⁰ Cousins, 'Germany continues'.

⁹¹ Amy Hawthorne and Andrew Miller, 'Worse Than Mubarak', *Foreign Policy*, 27 February 2019.

⁹² Wolfgang Mühlberger, 'Egypt's Foreign and Security Policy in Post-R2P Libya', *The International Spectator* 51, no 2 (2016), 99–112.

⁹³ Middle East Monitor, 'Video shows Egypt soldiers fighting in Libya's Derna', 19 February 2019.

⁹⁴ Daniela Musina, 'The Egyptian Security Complex and Libya's slow pace transition', *Mediterranean Affairs*, 04 October 2016.

⁹⁵ Patrick Wintour, 'Libya crisis: Egypt's Sisi backs Haftar assault on Tripoli', *The Guardian*, 14 April 2019.

economic and security benefits for Egypt. In the meantime, this goal is not exactly to be reached by the same tools as the Western participants want to. The Eastern part of Libya (Cirenaica) and the 1,200 kilometres long border is the stronghold of corruption, drug and arms trafficking which keeps alive Egyptian black market and corruption. Fighters of ISIS and other terrorist organisations, members of Salafist groups move freely from Libya to Egypt and backwards; from a security point of view this is the result of the fact that Egypt is stuck between the civil war-torn Libya and the Islamist terror-torn Sinai Peninsula. Haftar promised to restore public security and to eliminate Islamist hotbeds in exchange for Egyptian support.⁹⁶

A clear sign of Russia and Egypt inching closer in policy to each other and of the joint support of Haftar is that Russian aircraft are allowed to use Egyptian airports, even the one as close as 60 miles from the Libyan–Egyptian border.⁹⁷ On behalf of the Eastern Libyan authorities the construction of a border wall started in January 2019 in order to handle security problems and to ensure border surveillance. It is worth mentioning that in 2016 even Algeria announced to build a 350 km long border wall on the Libyan border. The Egyptian army exercises greater control on the road between Musaid (one of the biggest border crossing points only 150 km East to Tobruk) and Sallum; however, its costs are getting harder to bear alone. One of the biggest military bases of the Middle East was opened in this region, and a part of the Egyptian rapid reaction forces is stationed here.⁹⁸

Egypt, as the biggest African export partner of Libya, has been importing increasing amounts of oil and natural gas from Libya since the Gulf War.⁹⁹ Even though its energy dependence can be partly reduced by the construction of a nuclear power plant – built with Russian help – and by the exploitation of the newly discovered Egyptian natural gas field, only cheap oil and gas import from Libya can meet the demands of the growing Egyptian economy in the short and the long term. Under the Gaddafi regime, about 1.5 million Egyptian guest workers lived in Libya.¹⁰⁰ By today, half of them returned to Egypt due to the civil war and the expansion of ISIS. The lost remittances have a catastrophic effect on Egyptian economy and increase further the already high Egyptian unemployment rate. Egypt's goal is first of all to ensure its own political and economic stability and growth, then as an essential part of it to enforce internal security and eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood. Cairo's intention is to continue and maintain the Libyan conflict until the realisation of their policy outcome.

In sum, Egypt is an indispensable participant of international forums on Libya mainly due to its influence on Haftar. Stabilising the Libyan security situation and helping a pro-Egyptian leadership to gain power are key elements for al-Sisi's power base. Besides strengthening economic and energetic relations with Libya, al-Sisi's political interest is to stop the expansion of the Muslim Brotherhood and to prevent terror attacks. By securing Libyan and Egyptian stability and internal security, al-Sisi can expand its foreign policy manoeuvrability in line with his geopolitical interests. Thus this regional actor is intent on

⁹⁶ Mustafa Fetouri, 'Does Libya have its own Al-Sisi in the making?', *Middle East Monitor*, 24 January 2019.

⁹⁷ Steven A. Cook, 'Putin Is Sneaking Up on Europe From the South', *Foreign Policy*, 31 August 2018.

⁹⁸ Ahmed Megahid, 'Scepticism abounds over Egypt–Libya border wall', *The Arab Weekly*, 03 February 2019.

⁹⁹ CIA, 'The World Factbook. Libya', s. a.

¹⁰⁰ Giuseppe Dentice, 'Egypt's Security and Haftar: al-Sisi's strategy in Libya', *IPSI*, 02 February 2017.

a policy outcome of stability, which is by definition a cessation of hostilities, but the policy tools it uses run counter to what the Western powers are implanting.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

The three Gulf States are regional actors who are also involved in the conflict. We analyse the three in one take as they share a regional separation from the conflict but are effected nonetheless. Qatar's decision to intervene on NATO's side surprised experts, even though Doha's decision was heavily influenced by the emerging international consensus. As a consequence, Qatar was the first Arab country to recognise the National Transitional Council and it offered fighter-bombers to the NATO operations. Security assurances and military assets, such as a U.S. air base at al-Udeid or as-Sajlija military camp (the biggest American forward base outside the U.S.), combined with support from France and the United Kingdom, all played an important role in Qatar's decision to join the NATO operation.

Besides chartering fighter-bombers, Qatar was also shipping armaments, providing material and training assistance to the new government. It also sold oil on Libyan behalf in order to avoid sanctions. Doha's objective was to re-position itself on the international stage, as it wanted to appear as a connecting link between East and West, an actor who can fill the space between the West and the reformed Islamist jihadists.¹⁰¹ However, not every Arab country welcomed Doha's decision, since it also backed Islamist groups in Libya, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. This adversely affected the interests of the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who consider the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups able to question the legitimacy of their regimes. With its insistence on intervening in Libyan domestic policy, Qatar lost the support of the Libyan population, meanwhile an increasing number of people started to accuse Doha of aiding terrorist organisations.¹⁰² Growing tensions peaked in 2017 when Bahrain, Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia announced that they were breaking off diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed economic sanctions against the country. Doha demanded an arms embargo¹⁰³ against Haftar and the LNA after the strongman launched his offensive against Tripoli in April this year which further increased tensions with Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia can be considered a new actor in the Libyan conflict, despite the fact that it did intervene in 2011 due to hostile relations and backed the rebels. The Kingdom established diplomatic relations with the new regime in 2012 which soon paid off economically: in 2013 Riyadh signed an agreement on investing in the Libyan oil sector. Through the intervention, Saudi Arabia wanted to increasingly solidify its U.S. alliance

¹⁰¹ David Roberts, 'Behind Qatar's Intervention In Libya', *Foreign Affairs*, 28 September 2011.

¹⁰² Jamestown Foundation, 'Qatar's Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who's on the Lists of Terrorists and Why', 14 July 2017; Erzsébet N. Rózsa et al., *Az Iszlám Állam kalifátusa* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó – Külügyi és Külgazdasági Intézet, 2016).

¹⁰³ Reuters, 'Qatar calls for arms embargo against Libya's Haftar', 16 April 2019.

but only with limited resources. This objective was fulfilled at the minimum level through shipping military equipment.¹⁰⁴

The Saudi activity in Libya intensified in parallel with the expansion of ISIS in 2016. International actors trusted that as a regional power Saudi Arabia would be able to control the Arab states. However, the above-mentioned Qatari strategy did not favour the peace process which led Riyadh to impose an economic blockade against Qatar in 2017.

One of Riyadh's most successful tools – that has been used in Libya as well – is Madkhali-Salafism, a conservative Islamic movement, which was created as the antipode of the Muslim Brotherhood. The movement has been gathering followers in Libya since 2011 and most experts consider the movement the most effective Saudi tool to influence Libyan public mood.¹⁰⁵ According to reports, Haftar's idea of attacking Tripoli was brought up during his visit to Riyadh on March 27 this year. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates supposedly supported Haftar's operation both rhetorically and materially.¹⁰⁶

The other Arab participant of the 2011 NATO intervention was the United Arab Emirates. The Arab Spring altered the balance of power in the region, encouraging Saudi Arabia and the UAE to seize the initiative. The UAE at first offered only humanitarian assistance; however, after seeing that Qatar was participating militarily more actively, the Emirates offered its fighter jets as well. The fact that Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE represented successfully 'the Libyan case' on Arab and Islamic forums contributed greatly to the international consensus in 2011. However, the initial consensus was rather an amalgamation of these countries' joint hatred for the Gaddafi regime and not a by-product of a larger political cooperation. As such, it is hardly surprising that the consensus terminated soon due to the anti-terrorist and anti-Muslim Brotherhood policy of the Emirates. Further cooperation amongst the states became impossible in 2014 when Khalifa Haftar launched his anti-terrorist operation against Bengasi. The UAE provided logistical and military assistance (mostly airstrikes) to the Haftar-led LNA, moreover, in 2016, it established a military base in Al-Khadim, 105 km East to Bengasi,¹⁰⁷ whose development continues ever since.

According to a 2017 UN report the UAE has been backing Haftar's forces with air and material support since 2014, violating the UN embargo.¹⁰⁸ Although theoretically the UAE supports the UN peace process, until the end of 2018 its external assistance to the LNA has been increasing.¹⁰⁹ As a clear sign, the Emirates offered the GNA's military leaders in the south rewards if they served in Haftar's forces¹¹⁰ hoping that it can precipitate Haftar's offensive in Southern Libya. At the same time, the UAE aims to strengthen its relations with the GNA as well, in order to achieve its strategic interest. In this spirit in the end of

¹⁰⁴ Sherif Elashmawy, 'The foreign policies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar towards the Arab Uprisings', *ECPR*, August 2014.

¹⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, 'Addressing the Rise of Libya's Madkhali-Salafis', *ICG Report*, 25 April 2019, 27–29.

¹⁰⁶ Washington Post, 'Saudi Arabia's reckless prince fuels yet another civil war', 15 April 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Aidan Lewis, 'Covert Emirati support gave East Libyan air power key boost: U.N. report', *Reuters*, 09 June 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Lewis, 'Covert Emirati support'.

¹⁰⁹ Frederic Wehrey and Wolfram Lacher, 'The Wrong Way to Fix Libya', *Foreign Affairs*, 19 June 2018.

¹¹⁰ Middle East Monitor, 'Egypt, UAE send military support to Libya's Haftar', 22 June 2019.

2018 rumours spread about Emirati ambitions to build relations with persons loyal to the GNA in Tripoli.¹¹¹ That said, in 2019 it is likely that stronger relations still prevail within UAE and the LNA. Today, arms shipments to the LNA are still causing problems not only to the international community, but to the GNA as well.¹¹²

For these actors, the policy tools are at best coordinated on an ad hoc manner. While all three actors are using both soft and hard tools in Libya, Qatar and the UAE were more active in the conflict than Saudi Arabia. All three countries are using Libya as a field to strengthen their status quo in the Gulf, with little genuine interest in the peace process. The fact, that Libya is also a country with hefty reserves of crude oil and natural gas, makes it a rival on the market. Thus, it is likely, that Gulf countries either would prefer a government on which they have influence, or persistent turmoil. The involvement of Riyadh is also deeply affected by the Turkish activities in Libya, since there is an existing and growing competition between the two for regional predominance.

Turkey

Turkish policy outcomes can be divided into two distinct areas. The first area is based on the intention to gain fast economic results in the short run, for example in Libyan building industry. The second political goal is interpretable in the neo-Ottoman foreign policy framework characterised by the former minister Davutoğlu.¹¹³ It is a long-term strategic vision that means a strong political influence in the MENA region, support of the Muslim Brotherhood, and a significant economic presence. The recently found new gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean could diminish the importance of Turkey in the energy market, thus it is its evident goal to acquire more territory in the Mediterranean Sea in order to explore new fields, to extract gas and to maintain its important role in each pipeline project.¹¹⁴

Turkey was severely affected by the 2011 events in Libya, most notably on the economic front. In its last years, the Gaddafi regime hosted about 20,000 Turkish guest workers and cc. 15 billion USD Turkish investments flowed mainly to the Libyan construction industry.¹¹⁵ The events of the Arab Spring caught Turkey off guard, but Turkey quickly seized the opportunity to expand its influence in the region by embarking on a path of foreign policy involvement. However, the situation soon became increasingly turbulent.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Frederic Wehrey and Jalel Harchaoui, 'Is Libya Finally Ready for Peace?', *Foreign Affairs*, 30 November 2019.

¹¹² Wintour, 'Libya crisis'.

¹¹³ Ömer Taşpınar, 'Turkey's Middle East Policies Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism', *Carnegie Papers*, no 10 (2008), 3; Alexander Murinson, *Turkish Foreign Policy in the 21st Century. Neo-Ottomanism and the Strategic Depth Doctrine* (London – New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

¹¹⁴ Zoltán Egeresi, 'Kelet-mediterráneumi gázkincs: a ciprusi válság új dimenzióban', *Stratégiai Védelmi Kutatóintézet Elemzések*, 2019/16.

¹¹⁵ Reuters, 'Turkey says offered Gaddafi "guarantee" to quit Libya', 10 June 2011; Péter Tálás et al., 'A líbiai beavatkozás motivációi és nemzetközi megítélése', *Nemzet és Biztonság* 4, no 3 (2011), 81.

¹¹⁶ Bilgin Ayata, 'Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing Arab World: Rise and Fall of a Regional Actor?', *Journal of European Integration* 37, no 1 (2015), 95–96.

During the escalation of the crisis, Ankara tried to mediate between the opposing parties with the use of soft foreign policy tools, and in this vein Turkey built its relations with the opposition quite early.

Ankara's initial reactions to the protests were similar to the Western allies, but in Libya, Turkey strongly opposed both sanctions and military intervention. Even so, in spite of this strong anti-interventionist rhetoric, Turkey continues to allow NATO to use the airbase in Izmir. (Until mid-2012, it seemed that Turkey could be an effective mediator and a model of democratisation, as it deployed a range of soft power instruments (e.g. financial assistance, technical expertise, civil society support), but after that its policies took a pro-military turn.¹¹⁷

One of the main features of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's foreign policy is the active involvement in the Libyan conflict. But due to Turkey's NATO membership and to the fact that local Turkish interests are contradicting partially Russian interests, this policy has a limited opportunity to become fully adopted. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) supports the Muslim Brotherhood, which is the determining fracture line among the international actors of the Libyan war. General Haftar accuses Ankara of backing radical Islamist groups, and Haftar even ordered Qatari and Turkish nationals to leave Eastern Libya in 2014.¹¹⁸

Ankara is a committed supporter of the Serraj Administration. Haftar blamed Turkey several times for shipping ammunition and small arms to Tripoli, violating the UN embargo. In December 2018, two Turkish shipments carrying various types of rifles and munitions were seized, which Haftar argued were meant to support central government forces and militias.¹¹⁹ After this scandal, the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) initiated an investigation, and Prime Minister Serraj and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu were forced to announce a joint investigation.

Turkey is an essential actor in the Libyan consolidation process. During the Palermo Conference in November 2018, the Turkish vision of the future Libya became evident when the Turkish delegation decided to abruptly leave the conference when Haftar showed up. In the weeks before the conference, the Turkish Minister of Defence made an official visit to Libya and Serraj was welcomed by President Erdoğan in Ankara. Scheduled air services are operating between Libya and Turkey, and economic relations have been recovering. Ankara expressed its deep concerns about Haftar's offensive against Tripoli, while the deepening civil war prevents Libyan stability and hampers economic cooperation between the two countries. Turkey has a strong and clear output in order to support the GNA since the beginning of 2019. Turkish participation has been increased alongside the GNA, by the direct military involvement and installation of efficient technology of drones and anti-aircraft defence system. Thus, Haftar lost its advantage in the fight for Tripoli.

From the Turkish point of view, the worst-case scenario in the eastern Mediterranean is a possible agreement between Greek Cypriots and Greece on sharing of naval sovereignty areas; therefore, Ankara reached a deal with Tripoli about coastal sharing. Analysing the

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 100–102, 97.

¹¹⁸ Lorenzo Sigillino, 'Libya: the theatre of Turkish isolation', *Mediterranean Affairs*, 21 May 2015.

¹¹⁹ The Arab Weekly, 'Haftar accuses Turkey of violating arms embargo on Libya', 21 December 2018.

actual political framework, Libya seems to be the only possible ally for Turkey in the MENA region.

Ankara's advocacy in the Libyan new civil war is based on ideology in addition to a strong geostrategic necessity. It remains to be seen how specifically Ankara will balance between supporting the 'Islamist' government of Tripoli and following the logic of economical-political pragmatism, as an independent Turkish foreign policy regarding Libya will be limited by contrasting Turkish–Russian relations. In the light of developments, Turkey is expected to fuel the conflict until it almost reaches its goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our analysis demonstrates that although rhetorically the majority of the international actors supports the territorial unity and political stability of Libya, their diverging political, economic and security interests hinder its realisation. We analysed great powers, European powers and regional powers, and found our original hypothesis broadly supported by the data. We showed that almost all of the actors involved are interested in the cessation of hostilities in the Libyan conflict but even when the policy goals of the actors involved do convalesce, this is insufficient to end hostilities. The fact that the policy tools themselves and the methods employed, the hard and soft policy tools used by the actors are not coordinated between the actors remains a significant block to the end of hostilities and the end of this new civil war. These policy tools produce counter-acting effects and off-set each other, resulting in hindering the desired cessation from occurring.

The actors we examined in this case study were the great powers, the European powers and regional powers. As to the great powers, the vacuum caused by the lack of active U.S. involvement opened the way for other great and middle powers to influence the Libyan situation with their soft and hard foreign policy tools on the basis of their own interests. China is enhancing its efforts to fill the above-mentioned power vacuum, and its geopolitical interests require to intervene softly, but firmly in Libyan domestic policy. Russia is backing not only Haftar, but the Tripoli Government and Misratan militias as well, and since Haftar's role in the future Libya is far from certain, Russia cannot allow itself to back *only* him. The fact that Moscow has built relations with the major Libyan parties enables it to be the mediator which can influence its negotiations with the EU on several matters.

Among EU member states, Italy and France are the most important actors in Libya. These two states are able to influence Libya's future either with soft or with hard foreign policy tools. Italy can be considered a traditional player in Libya due to its colonial past, while France has been reacting more quickly and more firmly to the events of the Arab Spring, and as a consequence, its influence in the region has been increasing. Both countries aspire to a leading role in the stabilisation process. By contrast Germany, as the biggest donor country, is using only soft tools. Although it was not subject to our analysis we have to mention that the United Kingdom is using the majority of its resources to manage Brexit; as a consequence it has lost almost all ground in Libya.

Regarding regional powers, Egypt is using hard tools in Libya the most decisively; however, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey are all using hard tools to a minor extent. It must be noted that Saudi Arabia and Turkey are using the Libyan civil war to extend their power struggle for regional supremacy.

As a consequence of the international involvement, the Libyan stabilisation is getting further and further away. Conflicts of interest amongst great powers, regional powers and even EU member states are increasingly evident and increasingly grave (e.g. the deterioration of Italo–French bilateral relations) as Khalifa Haftar launched its operation against Tripoli in April 2019. This operation has been near openly backed by two permanent members of the UN Security Council (France and Russia) who are officially supporting the Serraj Government. The United States – apart from President Trump’s phone call with Khalifa Haftar – Italy and the United Kingdom have been consistently highlighting the need for a political solution, however, this is impossible without a consensus amongst great powers and without mediation between the major Libyan political and military power groups and without coordinated policy tools and responses.

As we argued, the conflict now is best characterised as a new type of civil war, where external actors play an outsized role in determining the possible cessation of hostilities. The fact that the opposing Libyan parties are backed by different international actors may lead to a Syria-like proxy war that can severely endanger European security. In short, without coordination between the policy tools themselves, where the individual external actors choose their type of policy tool through at least partial consultation with each other, the hostilities will likely continue. A sufficient critical mass of coordinated actors’ policy tools is needed for the conflict to possibly end. While the findings of the single-outcome case study may not be necessarily generalisable to all such cases, we hope that this argument can complement and inform the future study of new civil wars in a meaningful way.

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